

Message Text

SECRET

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51

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 TRSE-00

OMB-01 AID-20 MMS-03 IGA-02 RSR-01 /113 W

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P R 211650Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 959

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY PORT

AMEMBASSY PORT

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

SECDEF

JCS

S E C R E T CARACAS 7235

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: OGEN

SUBJECT: CONSEQUENCES OF TRANSFERRING USCINCSO COMMAND FROM PANAMA

REF: STATE 164406

1. IT IS OUR OPINION THAT CERTAINLY IN VENEZUELA AND PROBABLY ELSEWHERE IN LATIN AMERICA, TRANSFER OF USCINCSO COMMAND, PREFERABLY TO WASHINGTON, WOULD BE A WELCOME STEP. IT WOULD GO FAR TO REMOVE PLAUSIBILITY OF ALLEGATIONS THAT U.S. IS EXPLOITING PANAMA IN A SELF-APPOINTED ROLE FOR HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE; AND SO FAR AS VENEZUELAN SERVICE CHIEFS ARE CONCERNED, THEY WOULD PREFER TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THEIR OPPOSITE NUMBERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ALSO, I AT LEAST FEEL THAT INFLUENCE OF MILGP WOULD BE ENHANCED IF LOCAL COMMANDERS REALIZED THAT COMMANDER MILGP WAS IN DIRECT TOUCH WITH HIGH MILITARY AUTHORITIES IN THE UNITED STATES RATHER THAN HAVING TO ROUTE HIS RECOMMENDATIONS THROUGH A SUBORDINATE, EVEN THOUGH HIGHLY IMPORTANT, COMMAND.

2. I DO NOT FEEL THAT STATIONING USCINCSO IN PUERTO RICO WOULD GO DOWN WELL WITH THE VENEZUELAN AND PROBABLY MOST OTHER LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS BECAUSE, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, PUERTO RICANS ARE REGARDED AS HYBRIDS, BEING NEITHER WHOLLY LATIN NOR WHOLLY AMERICAN IN THE ANGLO-SAXON SENSE OF THAT WORD. THE OVERWHELMING PRESTIGE OF WASHINGTON INDICATES TO MY MIND THAT THAT IS WHERE USCINCSO ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE BASED.

3. RE PARA TWO-B REFTTEL, I THINK PRACTICALLY ALL THIRD NATIONS WILL WELCOME A U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE IF THAT PRESENCE IS CLEARLY DEFINED AS PROTECTION AND DEFENSE OF THE PANAMA CANAL. HERE WE SHOULD NOT BE UNMINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT IT IS NOT ONLY LATIN GOVERNMENTS WHO HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF THE PANAMA CANAL; THE ANTIPODEAN COUNTRIES, JAPAN, AND THE NATIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA ALSO HAVE AN INTEREST IN SEEING THAT THE PANAMA CANAL IS ABLY ADMINISTERED AND PROPERLY DEFENDED; AND IT WILL BE TAKEN AS A MATTER OF COURSE THAT UNTIL OTHER ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA THE UNITED STATES MUST SHOULDER THE BURDEN OF THE CANAL'S DEFENSE.

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4. THE COMMENTS HAVE NO RELATION TO THE MAGNIFICENT COOPERATION AND SUPPORT WHICH THIS EMBASSY AND MILGP HAVE RECEIVED FROM A SUCCESSION OF DISTINGUISHED COMMANDERS IN SOUTHCOM. HOWEVER, FOR THE REASONS ADDUCED ABOVE, I FEEL THAT A MOVE BACK TO WASHINGTON WOULD BE WISE.
MCCLINTOCK

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NNN

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